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TAGS: [OREP](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#) [ISRAEL RELATIONS](#)

SUBJECT: MOSSAD DIRECTOR MEIR DAGAN TELLS CODEL LIEBERMAN  
THAT U.S. MUST ACT NOW TO STOP IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: In his meeting with CODEL Lieberman on May 2, Meir Dagan, Director of Mossad, laid out steps that he said the United States should take to block Iran's efforts at acquiring and producing nuclear weapons. Dagan also presented his assessments of Iran's support for Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist organizations and the political position of Palestinian President Abbas, as well as the current situation in, and future of, Iraq. The delegation, consisting of Senator Joseph Lieberman and staff aide Fred Downey, was accompanied by the Ambassador and emboffs. End Summary.

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How to Thwart Iran's Nuclear Ambitions  
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2. (C) Dagan stated that Iran has three reasons for pursuing nuclear weaponry. The first is to secure the position of the current Iranian regime. He said that Iran has drawn a bad lesson from the experiences of North Korea, and it now believes that if it can create nuclear weapons, the rest of the world will have no choice but to leave Iran alone. Second, the Iranian regime also hopes that a nuclear capability would change the country's position in the Middle East, leaving it able to force its will upon neighboring countries. The third reason Dagan elaborated is what he termed the "'Israel equation.'" Iran believes that Israel has nuclear weapons, and thus Iran must go nuclear as a balancing force in the region.

3. (S) In Dagan's estimation, the world has reached a critical point in relations with Iran. Iran is now close to solving the technological problems regarding aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle. From the point that those problems are solved, it is just a matter of time before Iran will acquire a nuclear bomb. At the same time that the regime is working to create enriched uranium, it is also attempting to create the delivery mechanism for such fissile material, and may already have such weapon systems. The one weakness Dagan saw in Iran's nuclear ambitions is that its projects to create centrifuges are centralized.

4. (C) At this point, Dagan said, the world must stop Iran from creating enriched uranium. He laid out several steps that the United States can take to this end. Dagan said that the first and most important step is bringing the Iranian nuclear issue to the United Nations Security Council as soon as possible, and preventing what he characterized as a flood of technology into Iran. Iranian nuclear scientists must not be allowed to participate in conferences with European or American scientists. Second, a system of sanctions must be created to put economic pressure on Iran. Dagan said that Iran's dependence on oil imports due to its lack of refinery capacity is one factor that can be taken into account when considering sanctions.

5. (C) Sanctions against Iran would also, Dagan said, create pressure on Iranian opposition groups to act against the regime. The United States must encourage different groups to become more serious in their efforts to undermine the regime, Dagan said, citing the Solidarity movement in Poland of the 1980s as an example of such opposition pressure helping to bring down a regime. Dagan said that a large portion of Iranians is pro-American, especially in the cities, which account for 40 percent of the country's population.

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Iran and the Palestinians  
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6. (S) Even without a nuclear capability, Iran currently poses a threat to the stability of the Middle East through its support of terrorist organizations, Dagan asserted. According to Dagan, Iran has supported terrorist action against Israel through Hizballah and encouraged recruitment, both directly and indirectly, through organizations such as Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Two specific branches of Hizballah, Dagan said, gather intelligence and launch terror activities. Iranians, themselves, are directly attempting to recruit Arab-Israelis, while at the same time encouraging Hizballah to recruit members of Fatah and other groups. Dagan said that Palestinian Islamic Jihad has been receiving money from

Iran based on the number of terror attacks that it carries out. Dagan warned that Iran has also grown closer to Hamas. He said that Iran supports Hamas partly out of ideological, anti-Israel views, and partly in an attempt to curb Israel's influence and to expand its own influence in the Middle East.

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Hamas and the Future of President Abbas  
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17. (C) Dagan emphasized that, while some kind of ceasefire is now in effect and terrorist attacks against Israel have indeed declined drastically, the number of terrorist warnings and "events" are still very high. He blamed Palestinian President Abbas for being ineffective against Hamas, thus allowing Hamas to use the current lull to reorganize. Dagan said that Hamas agreed to the ceasefire for "tactical" reasons only, mainly because it wanted to concentrate in the coming months on enhancing its political power through the upcoming Palestinian elections. In addition, Dagan claimed that the IDF's success in damaging Hamas's capability and leadership has also caused the group to retrench. He contended that it is only a matter of time until the Palestinian groups abandon the ceasefire.

18. (C) President Abbas's support among the Palestinian people, Dagan said, comes from popular frustration with the continuing struggle with Israel, Israel's rejection of talks with the old Palestinian leadership, and corruption within the Palestinian Authority (PA). Dagan predicted, however, that Abbas would lose this support because Abbas, despite some actions, is incapable of effecting real reform. One barrier to reform that Dagan cited was what he claimed is the fact that Abbas has only two true allies in the PA, Finance Minister Salam Fayyad and Civil Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan. He described these men, however, as neither honest enough to gain popular support nor strong enough to exert authority. He said he could identify no Palestinian leaders who meet both these requirements.

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The Future of Iraq  
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19. (S) The subject of Iran again came up in Dagan's assessment of the situation in Iraq. Iran has played a negative role in Iraq because it hopes to see the state dominated by Shia, he said, who would in turn be dominated by Iran. Dagan said that Iran is encouraging Iraqi groups close to the regime's ideology, such as radical Shia groups that are participating in the new political structure of Iraq. Iran feels besieged by the American presence in neighboring Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and has, he charged, allowed Al Qaeda members to take harbor in or transit through Iran.

10. (C) Dagan characterized his view of Iraq as optimistic based on the economic growth, and improved services and living conditions, in the country. He conditioned his optimism on the new government's ability to recruit the support of different factions, such as the Kurds and Sunni, and to fight effectively against terrorist elements such as Zarqawi. Through terrorist actions against Iraqis, he said, Zarqawi's forces have tried to discourage people from participating in the system and have attempted to create a rift between Shia and Sunni groups.

11. (U) CODEL Lieberman did not clear this cable.

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